

D-366  
Johnson Building  
Cambridge  
1898

The Johnson building is a principal commercial block in the heart of Cambridge's business district. The two-story, eleven-bay pressed brick façade is distinguished by the survival of faint stenciling across the top of the front wall. Interspersed on four separate white brick panels are the name, "The Johnson Building," as well as the construction date of 1898. In addition, red and white pressed brick laid in narrow butter joints, the front is enhanced by rusticated stone window lintels and sills along with a pressed metal cornice that stretches across the entire eleven bay parapet wall. The pressed metal cornice features an even series of brackets, dentils, and sunburst motifs.

With its documented date of construction in 1898, the chain-of-title research reveals this large commercial block was erected during the ownership of David Straughn, Michael Snyder and Annie E. Snyder, who acquired the property in 1889 from William H. Barton and his wife Susan. David Straughn, of Dorchester County, and the Snyders, of York County, Pennsylvania, sold the property the year after the structure was built to Colonel W. Lee Dixon for \$5,000, indicating by the purchase price the presence of a substantial improvement. The construction of the commercial block is also borne out by consecutive issues of the Sanborn insurance maps in 1896 and 1901, which show distinctly different building outlines in those years. The commercial block depicted on the 1901 map housed a furniture store, hardware and paint store, and a confectioner. The Johnson Building label stems from the fact that the property was owned by Joseph H. Johnson and his descendants from 1903 to 1920.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. D-366

### 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Johnson Building

other

### 2. Location

street and number 523-531 Poplar Street not for publication

city, town Cambridge vicinity

county Dorchester

### 3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Various owners (Yihan Properties, Charles N. Lednum Jr., Corinne B. and Michael Mitsak)

street and number (see attached) telephone

city, town state zip code

### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dorchester County Clerk of Court liber folio

city, town Cambridge tax map tax parcel tax ID number

### 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District  
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER  
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT  
☐ Other:

### 6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	Contributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	Contributing 1
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	Noncontributing buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> defense	Noncontributing sites
		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	Noncontributing structures
		<input type="checkbox"/> education	Noncontributing objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	Noncontributing Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	
		<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory

## 7. Description

Inventory No. D-366

### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Johnson Building is located at 523-531 Poplar Street in the central business district of Cambridge, Dorchester County, Maryland. The large two-story, eleven-bay stretcher bond brick commercial block includes three separate storefronts with different finishes on the first store and a unified elevation across the second story. The front wall rises to a parapet with a long sloping roof to the asymmetrical rear wall. Built in 1898, the Poplar Street elevation is laid in closely set pressed brick with a narrow butter joint. The building faces west, and the current storefronts are occupied by a doctor's office, bookstore and jewelers.

The west (main) elevation is an eleven bay façade with three different storefront designs. Lednum's Jewelers occupies the southern three-bay section, and the first story dates from the mid twentieth century. The bookstore, "Never On Tuesdays," occupies the largest section, which is six bays across and the storefront is composed of large display windows to each side of a recessed entrance. The northern most section is two bays across and is defined by a wood shingled roof that protects a slight extension of the storefront. The second story is defined by a regular series of eleven window openings featuring rusticated stone lintels and sills. The sash vary from nine-over-nine divisions in the northern two bays to single-pane sash with small perimeter panes in the other openings. The wall surface above the second story windows is marked by four rectangular panels executed in different sizes and marked by a faint stenciled name and date, "The Johnson Building, 1898." The stretcher bond brickwork continues to the parapet roof, which is enriched with a pressed metal cornice of evenly spaced brackets. In between the brackets are dentil blocks. A repeating sunburst motif below the dentils and between the brackets enhances the cornice as well.

The north side wall is laid in five-course common bond with an asymmetrical series of two-over-two sash windows topped by brick jack arches. There is a diamond shaped vent in the upper wall surface to allow air circulation through the loft space above the second floor rafters. The building extends to the rear with its long sloping roof to an uneven east elevation of common bond brickwork with jack arches spanning the remaining window openings. Several of the window openings across the rear wall have been closed up. Fixed in the southeast corner of the rear wall is a section of frame built infill with a second floor screened in porch.

The first floor interiors have been reworked with later finishes. The second floor interiors were not seen.

## 8. Significance

Inventory No. D-366

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/	<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates

Architect/Builder

Construction dates 1898

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

### SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Johnson building is a principal commercial block in the heart of Cambridge's central business district. The two-story, eleven bay pressed brick façade is distinguished by the survival of faint stenciling across the top of the front wall. Interspersed on four separate white brick panels are the name, "The Johnson Building" as well as the date of its construction in 1898. In addition to the red and white pressed brick laid in narrow joints, the front is enhanced by rusticated stone window lintels and sills along with a pressed metal cornice across its entire eleven-bay parapet wall. The pressed metal cornice features an even series of brackets, dentils and sunburst motifs.

With its documented date of construction in 1898, the chain-of- title research reveals that this large commercial block was erected during the ownership of David Straughn, Michael Snyder and Annie E. Snyder, who acquired the property in 1889 from William H. Barton, Jr. and his wife Susan.<sup>1</sup> David Straughn, of Dorchester County, and the Snyders, residing in York County, Pennsylvania sold the property the year after the structure was built to Colonel W. Lee Dixon for \$5,000,<sup>2</sup> indicating a valuable improvement was located on the site. The construction of the commercial block is also borne out by the issues of the Sanborn Insurance maps in 1896 and 1901, which show distinctly different outlines for the improvements in those years. The commercial block depicted in 1901 housed a furniture store, hardware and paint store, and a confectioner. The Johnson Building label stems from the fact that the property was owned by Joseph H. Johnson and his descendants from 1903 to 1920.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dorchester County Land Record, CL 13/69-75, 1 October 1889.

<sup>2</sup> Dorchester County Land Record, CL 23/234, 9 March 1899.

<sup>3</sup> Dorchester County Land Records, CL 27/615, 14 March 1903 and WHM 9/539, 31 December 1920.

D-366  
Johnson Building  
Cambridge

List of Owners-

**525 Poplar Street Charles N. Lednum, Jr. (Lednum Jewelers)**  
2 Hatswamp Road  
Cambridge, Maryland 21613-1006

Deed Reference, PLC 213/722, Account # 07-129009

**527 Poplar Street Corrine B. and Michael L. Mitsak**  
527 Poplar Street  
Cambridge, Maryland 21613-1833

Deed Reference, MLB 589/868, Account # 07-113315

**531 Poplar Street, Yihan Properties, LLC**  
5454 Elks Lodge Road  
Cambridge, Maryland 21613-3446

Deed Reference, MLB 573/702, Account # 07-150660

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. D-366

Name Johnson Building  
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

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CHAIN-OF-TITLE  
525 Poplar Street

DKL 9/40

Last Will and Testament of Esther J. Lednum  
(who departed this life on 12.29.1977)

to

Charles Noble Lednum, Jr. (Personal Representative of  
Esther J. Lednum)

213/722

to

3.6.1980

Charles Noble Lednum, Jr.

All that lot, and brick store building thereon, known and designated as Number 22 Poplar Street, in what is known or was known as "The Johnson Building," and being the same store property which was occupied by the Douglas Radio Company....which is described in an aforesaid deed from Granville S. LeCompte and Gertrude Lee LeCompte, his wife, to C. Noble Lednum and Esther J. Lednum

WHM 9/539

Fannie W. Johnson, widow of Joseph H. Johnson of Dorchester County deceased, Henry L. Johnson, unmarried, Lorenza E. Johnson, surviving brother of the said Joseph H. Johnson, and Susan W. Barton, widow of William H. Barton of Dorchester County, deceased

to

12.31.1920

Granville S. LeCompte and Gertrude Lee LeCompte

Whereas Joseph H. Johnson, of Dorchester County, deceased, by his Last will and Testament dated October 8, 1904, (JWF 2/449) devised all

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. D-366

Name Johnson Building  
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 2

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his estate unto his wife Fannie W. Johnson, for and during the term of her natural life and no longer, she to receive the rent and profits therefrom....

CL 27/615

H. Lee Dixon

to

3.14.1903

Joseph H. Johnson

\$18,000

CL 23/234

David Straughn and others

to

3.9.1899

H. Lee Dixon

\$5,000

Lease  
CL 13/69-75

William H. Barton, Jr. and Susan W. Barton

to

10.1.1889

David Straughn, Michael Snyder, and Annie E. Snyder

Whereas by deed of lease dated eighth day of April 1791 and now of record in HD 3/150 a certain Nicholas Hammond did lease and demise unto a certain James R. Stevens a parcel of land lying and being on Poplar Street between High Street and Gay Street in the town of Cambridge in said county...and in said deed of lease more particularly described, Whereas by deed of grant, dated the twenty sixth day of September 1879, FJH 13/474, from Charles H. Hammond, Julia Hammond, Mary B. Hammond and Mary G. Hammond unto William H. Barton, Jr.



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. D-366

Dorchester County Land Records, various volumes, Dorchester County Courthouse.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 13,191 square feet  
Acreage of historical setting 13,191 square feet  
Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The metes and bounds of this surveyed property are coincidental with the current boundary of the lot.

## 11. Form Prepared by

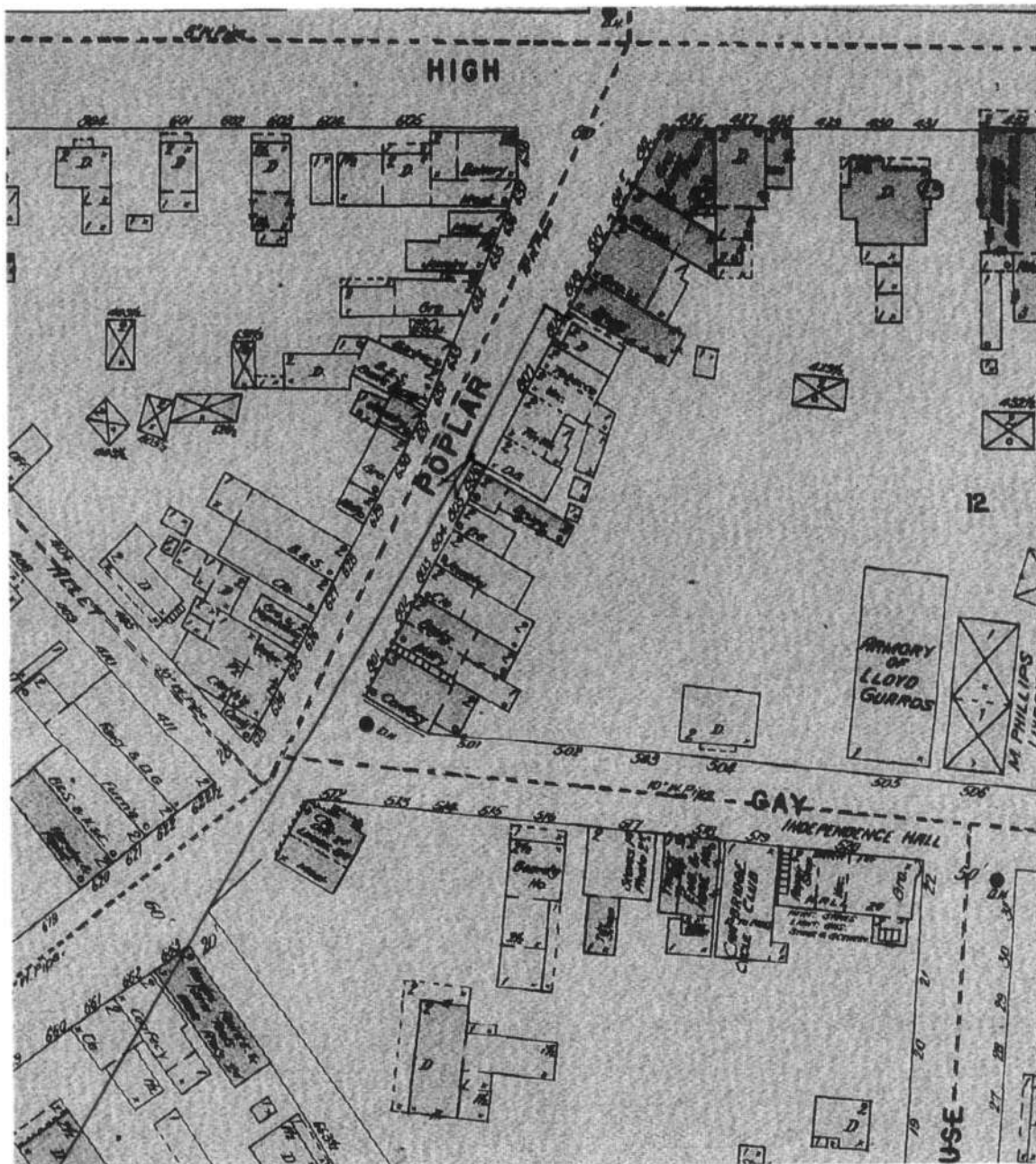
name/title	Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian		
organization	Chesapeake Country Heritage & Preservation	date	9/22/2007
street & number	P. O. Box 5	telephone	410-651-1094
city or town	Westover	state	Maryland 21871

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

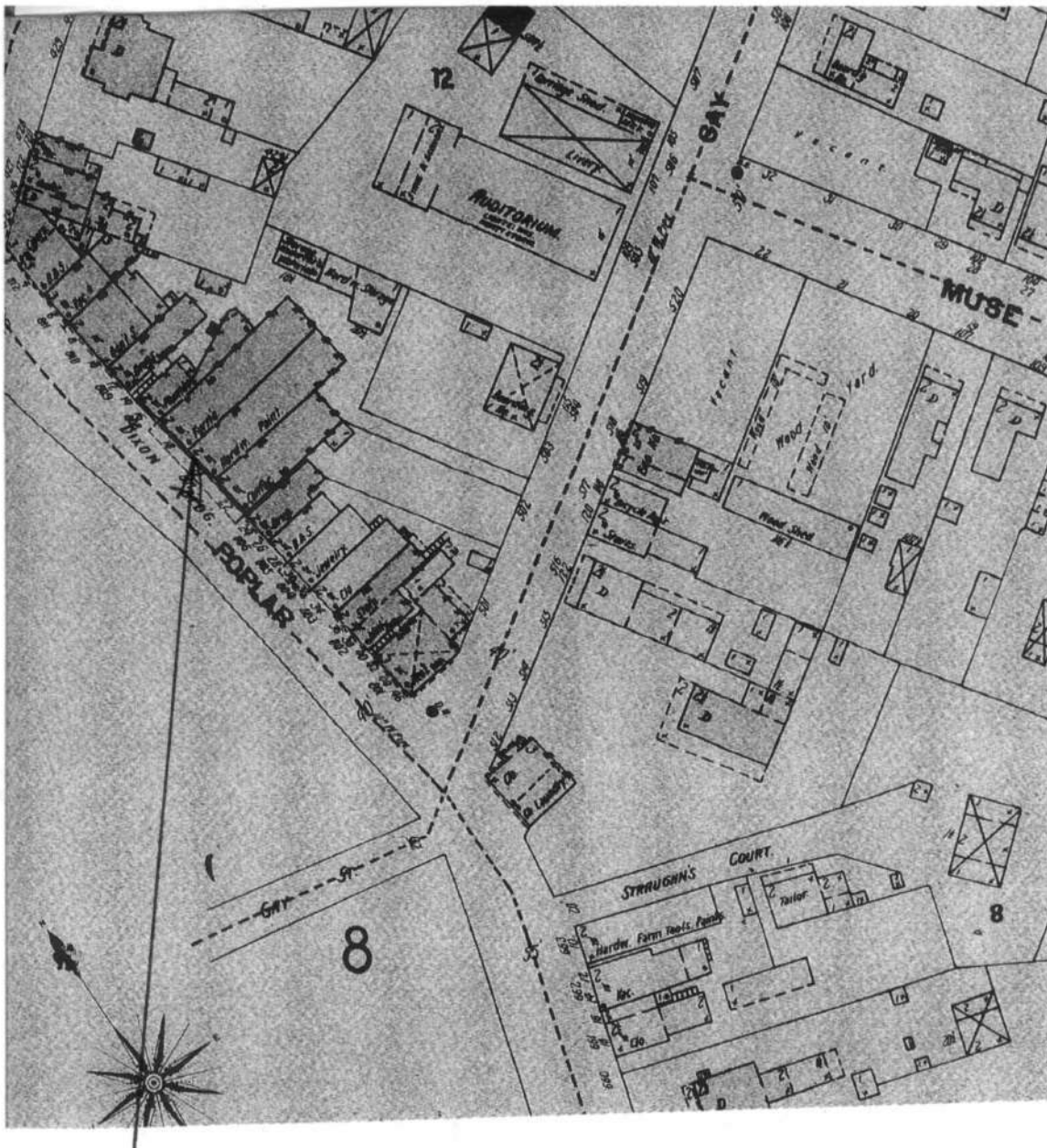
The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
DHCD/DHCP  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-514-7600

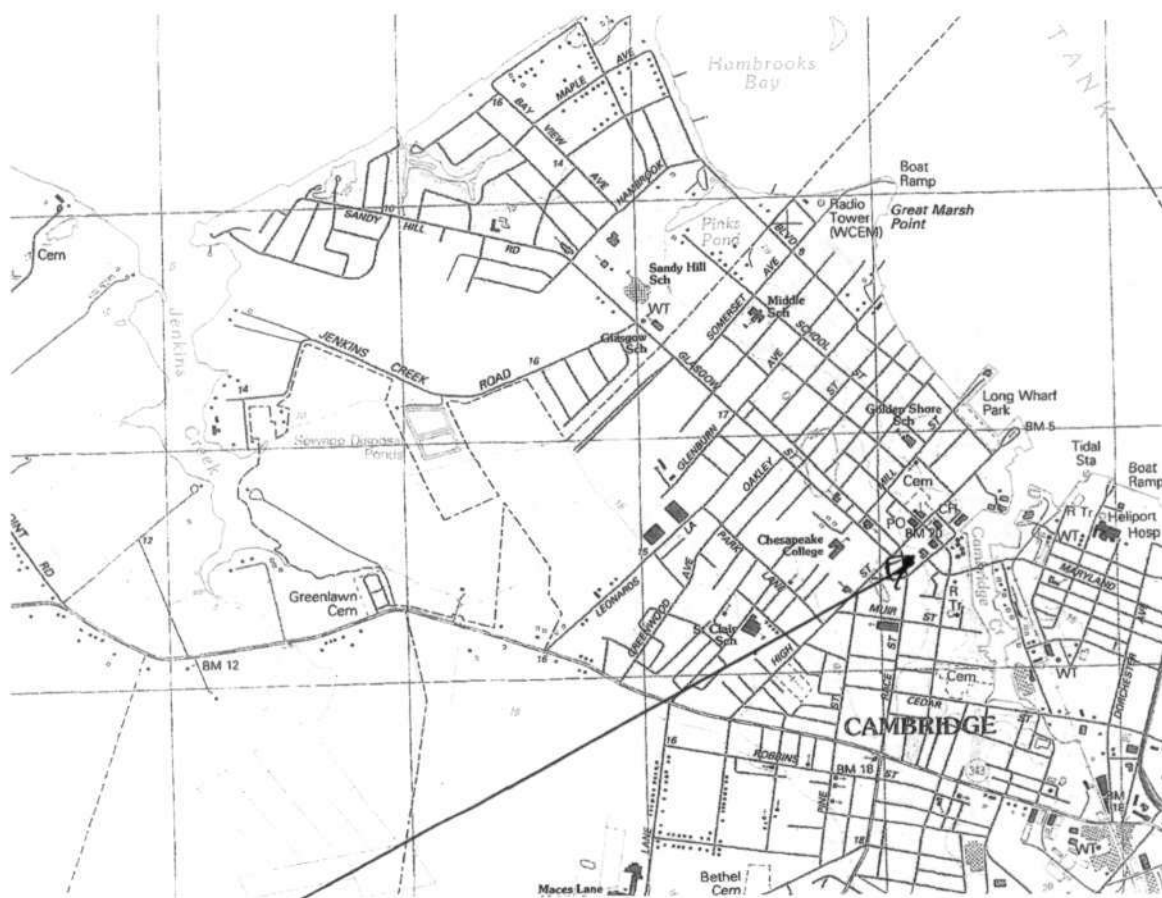




D-366, Johnson Building (site), 523-531 Poplar Street, Sanborn Insurance Map, 1896



D-366, Johnson Building, 523-531 Poplar Street, Sanborn Insurance Map, 1901



D-366, Johnson Building, 523-531 Poplar Street, Cambridge Quadrangle, 1988



D-766

Johnson Building - West Elev.

CAMBRIDGE, DORCHESTER Co., MD.

8/08, PAUL TONART, PHOTOGRAPHER

WET / MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

$\frac{1}{2}$



D-366

Johnson Building

Cambridge, Dorchester Co., MD.

Northeast Elevation

9/07, Paul Touart, Photographer

Wet., MD. Historical Trust



MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

D-366

1063664611

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Johnson Building

AND/OR COMMON

Dr. Van Huizen's office; Fox's Factory Outlet; Lednum's Jewelers

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

531-529-527-525-523 Poplar Street

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

STATE

Dorchester

COUNTY

Dorchester

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

— DISTRICT  
☒ BUILDING(S)  
— STRUCTURE  
— SITE  
— OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

— PUBLIC  
☒ PRIVATE

— BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

— IN PROCESS  
— BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

☒ OCCUPIED  
— UNOCCUPIED  
— WORK IN PROGRESS  
**ACCESSIBLE**  
☒ YES: RESTRICTED  
— YES: UNRESTRICTED  
— NO

**PRESENT USE**

— AGRICULTURE  
☒ COMMERCIAL  
— EDUCATIONAL  
— ENTERTAINMENT  
— GOVERNMENT  
— INDUSTRIAL  
— MILITARY  
— MUSEUM  
— PARK  
— PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
— RELIGIOUS  
— SCIENTIFIC  
— TRANSPORTATION  
— OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

531 Poplar St. - Pieter J. Van Huizen

Liber 163/Folio 583

Telephone \*\*\*

STREET & NUMBER

527-529 Poplar St. - Elmer E. Fox

Liber 148/Folio 53

CITY, TOWN

C. Noble Lednum

STATE, zip code

525-523 Poplar St. - xxxxxxxxxx

Liber 50/Folio 29

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Dorchester County Courthouse

Liber #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

206 High Street

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

STATE

Maryland 21613

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

D-366

**CONDITION****CHECK ONE****CHECK ONE**☐ EXCELLENT☐ DETERIORATED☐ UNALTERED☒ ORIGINAL SITE☐ GOOD☐ RUINS☒ ALTERED☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_☒ FAIR☐ UNEXPOSED

---

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

---

This long two story brick building now houses three separate businesses. Although the second story remains unaltered, each store front has been renovated in a different style, destroying the unity of what must have been an attractive building at one time. There are eleven windows across the second story, each with a flat stone arch above and stone sill below. The original name of the building and the date of construction, "The Johnson Building 1898", are inscribed in long rectangles of a lighter color brick above the second story windows. The pressed tin cornice is embellished with carved brackets and other ornamentation.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

## PERIOD

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This building is significant as one of the surviving late 19th century commercial structures in downtown Cambridge, which suffered the damage of several fires. The original character and unity of this building have been destroyed, however, by the store front renovations, each in a different style, of the three stores which occupy this building. The cornice and upper story are still intact, however. Urban renewal plans for Cambridge should encourage the renovation of these three store fronts in styles that are compatible with each other, as well as with the original character of the building, which was apparently simple but attractive.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Catherine L. Moore

ORGANIZATION

DATE

11/30/75

STREET &amp; NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Route 3, Box 32

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Cambridge

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438

523-527 Poplar Street  
Cambridge, Maryland

RSM 50/29

This building, along with its adjoining 531 and 527-529 Poplar Street, was built in the 1890's by David Straughn. It was known as the Johnson Building because it was owned by Joseph H. Johnson from 1903 to 1920. These structures are among several in downtown Cambridge that date from the late nineteenth century, although their exteriors have been altered considerably by later owners.

Sources:

Dorchester County Courthouse, Cambridge, Maryland.

Land RCcords.

Research by:

Terrance P. Walbert

1976

527-529 Poplar Street  
Cambridge, Maryland

PLC 148/53

This building was built at the same time as 523-527 Poplar Street and was part of the same property until 1955.

Sources:

Dorchester County Courthouse, Cambridge, Maryland.

Land Records.

Research by:

Terrance P. Walbert

1976

531 Poplar Street  
Cambridge, Maryland

PLC 163/583

This building was built at the same time as 523-527 Poplar Street.

Sources:

Dorchester County Courthouse, Cambridge, Maryland.

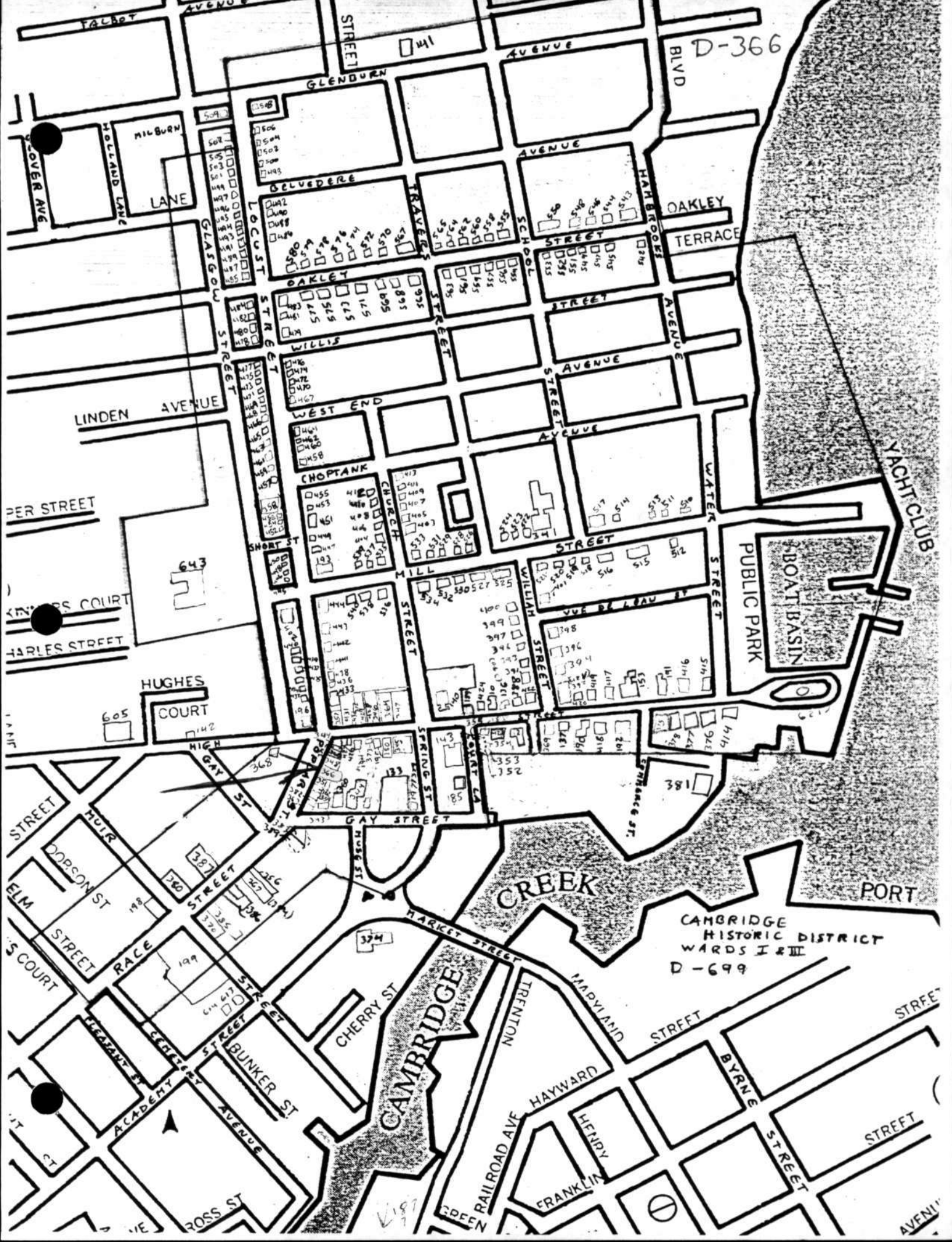
Land REcords.

Research by:

Terrance P. Walbert

1976





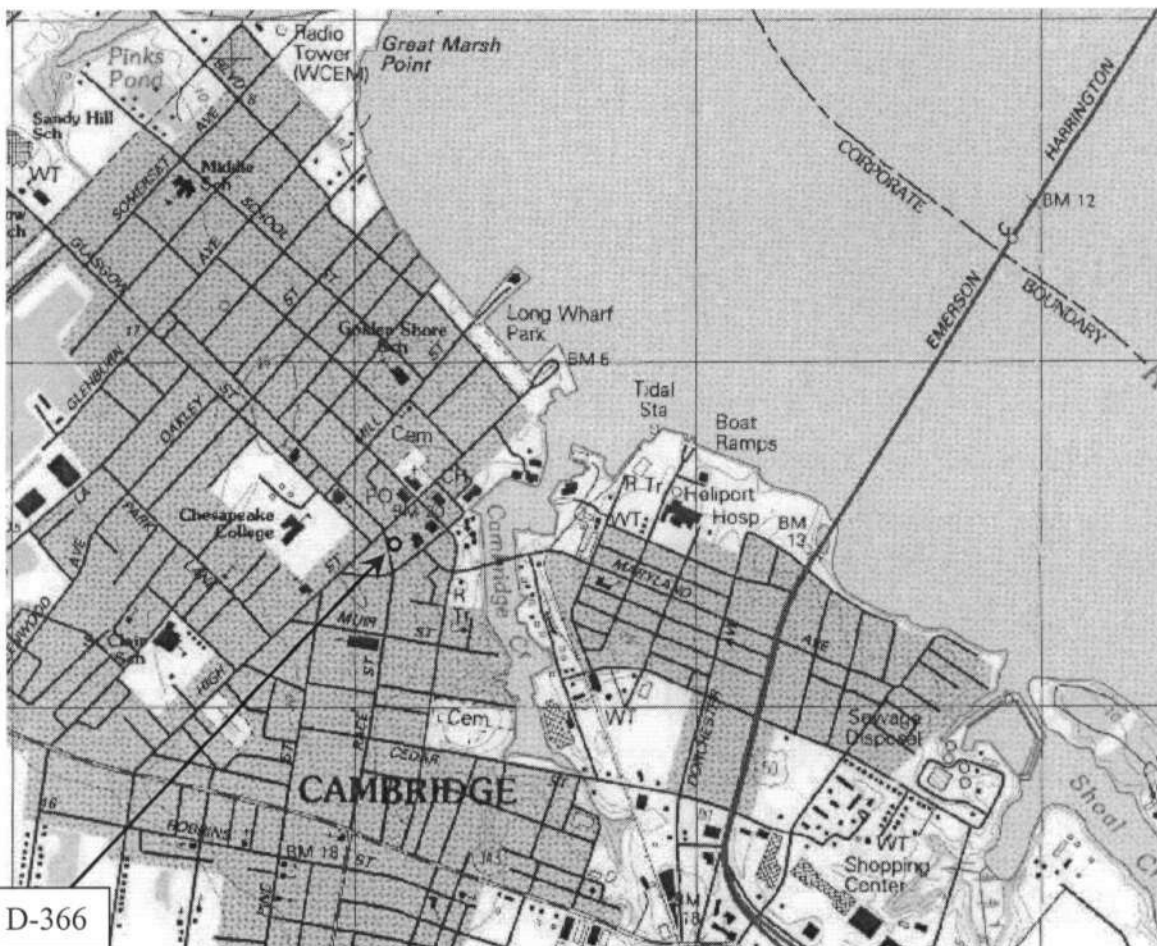
D-366

Johnson Building (Dr. Van Huizen's office, Fox's Factory Outlet, Lednum's Jewelers)  
523-531 Poplar St.

Cambridge

Cambridge Quad.

Dorchester Co.





Johnson Bldg. - 531-523 Poplar St., Cambridge, Md. - South Facade - C.L. Moore, 1976

D-366

45%